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The Force and Influence of Example,

particularly with Regard to the Encouragement and Support of PUBLIC CHARITIES:

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

The Cathedral Church of *St. Peter,*

EXON,

On Tueſday the 27th of *Auguſt*, 1765,

BEING

The Anniverſary of the Foundation of *The Devon and Exeter Hoſpital.*

By ROBERT WIGHT, A. M.

Prebendary of the ſaid Church.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Stewards and Gentlemen then preſent.

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For the Benefit of the Hoſpital.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

The Rt. Hon. WILLIAM Lord Viſcount COURTENAY, } Preſident,

EDWARD DREWE, Eſq; Vice-Preſident,

PETER MADOCK DOCTON, Eſq; } Treaſurers,
Mr. JOHN KELLEY, }

Sir GEORGE YONGE, Bart.
JOHN JONES, Eſq;
The Rev. Dr. WILLIAM MUSGRAVE,
The Rev. Mr. JOHN ACLAND,
Mr. SAMUEL COADE,
Mr. ANTHONY NOGUIER, } Stewards,

AND TO

The other Worthy Governors and Contributors to *The Devon and Exeter Hoſpital*,

The following Diſcourſe is, with all due Reſpect,

INSCRIBED

By Their moſt obedient humble Servant,

The Author.

II. Cor. ix. 2. latter Part.

--- And your Zeal has provoked very many.

THIS benevolent Apoſtle, who knew how to addreſs himſelf with the utmoſt Delicacy and Politeneſs, where he had to deal with Perſons of an humane and ingenuous Diſpoſition, as well as to reprove with Sharpneſs and Severity, where he ſaw a juſt Occaſion, compliments the *Corinthians* (* a People, who, from their happy Situation for Commerce, liv'd in great Splendor and Magnificence) for their intended Generoſity to the poor Chriſtians at *Jeruſalem*, in this, as well as the foregoing, Chapter, in the moſt handſome and obliging Manner poſſible.

* Vid. *Thucydidis Hiſt. de Bello Pelopon.* Lib. I. § xiii. Pag. 69. Ed. *Hudſon.* Vide *Iliad.* B. V. 570. Vid. etiam *Strabon.* Lib. VIII. Pag. 378.

He presumes, from their well-known Readiness, to such Acts of Benevolence, and the Alacrity with which they received the first Proposal, that he had no Occasion *to write unto them particularly* upon that Subject, or to exhort them anew to fulfil the Promises and Engagements, into which they had voluntarily and freely enter'd: — But, however, he *does write* unto them, and that somewhat copiously, upon that Head: — And, not content with writing, *sends* before-hand particular Persons to make their Collections against his coming; while he uses all the engaging Arguments to confirm and improve the good Disposition he found in them, and had mentioned so often to their Honour.

" For as touching the ministring to the Saints, (says he) " it is superfluous for me to write unto you. For I " know the Forwardness of your Mind, for which I " boast of you to them of *Macedonia*, that *Achaia* was " ready a Year ago: And *Your Zeal hath provoked* " *very many*. Yet *have I sent the* Brethren, lest our " boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; " that, as I said, ye *may be* ready: Lest haply, if they " of *Macedonia* come with me, and find you unprepa- " red, *We*, not to say *Ye*, should be ashamed in this same " confident Boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary " to exhort the Brethren, that they would go before " unto you, and make up before-hand your Bounty,

" † *whereof ye had Notice before*, that the ſame might " be ready as a Matter of Bounty and not of Cove- " touſneſs." i. e. As an Act of generous Liberality, " and not extorted by Sollicitation and Importunity.

And this muſt be *our Apology* for troubling our Hearers ſo often upon the ſame Subject, who (we know from Experience) are as ready to demonſtrate the Generoſity of their Souls by the Largeneſs of their Bounty, upon *all proper Occaſions*, as we *can* be to exhort them; and have generally honoured *theſe Anniverſaries* by their ſolemn Appearance in this Place in order to teſtify their Gratitude to God, who has enabled them to become the happy Inſtruments of his Providence in relieving the Pains and Diſtreſſes of the moſt miſerable and moſt afflicted Part of their Species, in a Way the moſt effectual, and the leaſt expenſive; and to excite and promote the ſame generous and laudable Diſpoſition in others; whoſe Zeal in this particular Inſtance of Active Benevolence, conducted with ſo much Prudence, and attended with ſuch viſible Succeſs, has had the ſame bleſſed Effects with that of the *Corinthians* of Old; And (we mention it with particular Satisfaction) *roused up and animated*, if not

firſt

† Vid. I. *Cor.* Chap. xvi. Ver. 1. But ſome render it " *ſpoken of before*," or " *declared before*." Others follow a different Reading, which ſignifies " *promiſed before*."

firſt *inſpired*, many other Parts of the Kingdom to copy the fair Example: *Some* ‖ of which have indeed made extraordinary Efforts to overtake thoſe who went before them in *Time*, by the Largeneſs of their Beneſactions and Subſcriptions. May the ſame *laudable Ambition*, from a Principle ſo diſintereſted, forever continue!

As, therefore, I cannot but entertain,—have *ſo much Reaſon* to entertain,—the ſame general Sentiments of this Honourable Aſſembly St. PAUL expreſſed towards his *Corinthians*, with reſpect to that particular Inſtance of Beneficence whereof he was ſpeaking, I ſhall confine myſelf, chiefly, in the following Diſcourſe, to thoſe Topics the Apoſtle thought ſufficient to addreſs unto them in the Epiſtle before me; and give you a larger Comment upon them, adapted to the preſent Occaſion.

It would indeed ſeem to inſinuate ſome Suſpicion, at leaſt Ignorance, of the virtuous Diſpoſition of my Audience, to enlarge minutely upon the many other Motives and Arguments proper to excite a Spirit of Benevolence and Charity in general, or to paint the Miſery and Diſtreſs of thoſe numberleſs Objects who ſurround you on every Side, or lie concealed in their noiſome Cells;—loſt to themſelves, their Families, and the Public;

‖ Vid. *Preſent State of the* Glouceſter *Infirmary*.

Public ;—loaded with Infirmities, languiſhing under an evil Habit of Body, groaning under the Anguiſh of their ulcerated Wounds, rack'd with excruciating Pains, or diſabled in their Limbs by ſome ſudden dreadful Diſaſter ; and labouring at the ſame Time under the Weight of irreſiſtible Poverty ;—helpleſs and friendleſs ; – unſkilful in the Medical Art themſelves, and unable to purchaſe the Aſſiſtance of thoſe Gentlemen of the Faculty, in whoſe Learning and Experience they may the moſt ſafely confide, and unto whom ye yourſelves apply in your own Neceſſities, and think yourſelves happy in having ſuch ſkilful Perſons at hand to apply unto : Whoſe Generoſity indeed has inclined them to ſecond your Charitable Views *(which would have been in great Meaſure diſappointed otherwiſe)* by giving their Advice and Aſſiſtance, *gratis*, within thoſe Salutary Walls, where the neceſſary Accommodations for the Patient's Eaſe and Support, together with the preſcribed Remedies, are provided by your Bounty :—As their Humanity doubtleſs would always engage them to beſtow them as freely whereſoever they might be wanted, and no other Returns but *grateful* Acknowledgments could be made them by their Patients.

Theſe are Topics, which, if enlarged upon, would employ too much of the Time we are allowed at preſent : And you have no ſuch Occaſion to be reminded

of what ye feel for the Miſerable, had ye not ſo often heard All that can be ſuggeſted, to greater Advantage, from others, who have appeared before you on the ſame, or the like, Occaſions. Ye will, therefore, I preſume, excuſe me from inſiſting upon them, tho' they are Conſiderations of great Weight and Importance in themſelves.

I. And, *firſt*, my Text leads me to obſerve ſomething of the Force of Good Example in the very Inſtance of Beneficence and Charity implied in the Words themſelves, which are to be underſtood in a metaphorical and figurative Senſe, —*And your Zeal hath provoked very many:* i. e. not raiſed their *Indignation* or *Reſentment*: — God forbid that the Deſign, or the Conduct, of ſuch a Charity, in the Hands of an Apoſtle, ſhould have excited the Diſpleaſure of Any whoſe Hearts were Human, tho' their Principles of Religion might be different, or that any of the new Converts among the Gentiles, who had ſo largely partaken of their Spirituals, ſhould have the leaſt Objection againſt imparting ſome Share of their Temporals to their Jewiſh Brethren in their preſent Diſtreſs: — Not *raiſed*, I ſay, the *Indignation*, but ſtirr'd up a godly *Emulation*, in the Breaſts of many, who had the innate Seeds and Principles of Benevolence in their Souls, but wanted ſuch a fair Example, upon ſo noble an Occaſion, to

lead

lead the way, and to ſtimulate and provoke them to Good Works, where their Zeal might be a little languid; and excite, as it were, the Paſſion, or higheſt Fervor, of Beneficence in their Breaſt †.

And this we find by Experience to be the natural Effect of *Example*, the Force of which the Apoſtle underſtood ſo well, as to make uſe of it to urge the *Corinthians* themſelves, who were ready of their own Accord, to ſtill greater Acts of Generoſity, by recommending in their Turn the extraordinary Efforts of the *Macedonians* to them. As He knew the noble and generous Temper of the *Corinthains*, who would not willingly be outdone by any Rival, he artfully touches upon that tender String, and raiſes a new Spirit in thoſe who had already diſtinguiſhed themſelves as Examples to others: — "I ſpeak not this by Commandment, "but by Occaſion of the Forwardneſs of others, and "to prove the Sincerity of your Love;" (Ch. viii. ver. 8.) or to give you an Opportunity of exhibiting a genuine Proof of your charitable Diſpoſition.

Benevolence and Compaſſion towards our own Species, or indeed towards any other Creature in Diſtreſs, is vulgarly, and juſtly, ſtyled *Humanity*, as one of the

† According to the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* x. 24. Καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων.

nobleſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing Characteriſtics of *Man*; and we cannot, without doing the utmoſt Violence to our Nature, or 'till we have contracted an unnatural Apathy, view without Pity the Diſtreſs, or turn the deaf Ear to the Cries, of a Wretch who implores our Aſſiſtance, and whoſe Wants are real and unfeigned. And the more intimately we feel thoſe tender Impreſſions, the greater our Humanity.

But we often want, or *think we want*, proper Occaſions of exerting it, and do not always ſeek them where they are to be found. We are doubtful of the real State of the Objects which preſent themſelves, as we have been frequently impoſed upon by fictitious Diſtreſs. We preſume *(a very wrong Preſumption oftentimes)* upon the Compaſſion and Fidelity of thoſe unto whom the Public Care of providing for the Neceſſitous more immediately belongs; — or perhaps the Diſtreſs is ſo great, or of ſuch a Nature, as to be beyond our ſingle Abilities, or above our Capacity, to remove: And, therefore, we do not attempt it. — But here, as in other Caſes, the Example of a Good Man, whoſe Zeal is warm and active, — (And 'tis neceſſary that there ſhould be ſome ſuch Perſon at the Head of every Grand Deſign, calculated for the Public Utility, which promiſes any Succeſs) who not only feels for the Miſerable who fall in his Way, but ſearches for them in their melancholy

choly Receſſes, and draws them out to the View and Notice of the World; who plans the Benevolent Scheme, whereby the Diſtreſſes of Thouſands, perhaps, may be remov'd, or Sorrows alleviated, and carries it into Execution; awakens the Zeal of others, whoſe Souls are congenial with his own; and the Enthuſiaſm ſpreads among all Orders by a ſort of DIVINE IMPULSE, that is almoſt irreſiſtible. *Men* hearken to his Voice, as the Voice of ſome Superior Being, perſwading them to approach the DIVINE NATURE by tranſcribing the moſt amiable of His Attributes; and to become, within their contracted Sphere, what GOD is over the Univerſe, Who *is Good unto All*, and *whoſe tender Mercy is over all his Works*. CHRISTIANS in particular revere him, as the lively Image of their Bleſſed REDEEMER, while on Earth, who *went about doing good, and healing all manner of Sickneſs, and all manner of Diſeaſe, among the People*, while the Poor had the Goſpel preached unto them. Nor can they reſiſt the Charms of his Eloquence who importunes them to be *Followers of him*, as *he alſo is of* CHRIST; who made mutual Love & Sympathy the Badge and Characteriſtic of his Diſciples & Followers; and by the Parable of the *Good Samaritan* taught them not to ſhut up their Bowels of Compaſſion againſt any Man, tho' of a different Sect or Party, that is a real Object of it. Hence Public Collections for the Poor in Times of Scarcity and Diſtreſs

ſet on foot by ſome diſtinguiſh'd Patriot, have been copied by Half the Nation. Hence Schools for the Support of Orphans, and for the Religious Education of the Children of the Neceſſitous, have been eſtabliſhed. Hence Hoſpitals and Infirmaries, of various Kinds, (as the Diſtreſſes of Mankind are innumerable) are founded by the united Contributions of the Well-diſpoſed; and ſupported by the ſame Spirit which animated the firſt Projectors. Hence it becomes faſhionable to be virtuous in *ſome* Inſtances, as it would be in *All*, would the ſame noble Examples lead the Way. Hence different Sects and Parties are taught to unite for the Public Benefit, and to contend only who ſhall be the moſt beneficent. Would to God the ſame Harmony ſubſiſted in all other Points, and that this were our only Contention! Hence a laudable Ambition is excited (which even the Niggard ſometimes feels) of becoming Governors and Directors of Public Charities, or of being rank'd in the Liſt of Honourable Subſcribers. Hence a new Taſte and Reliſh is acquired for generous Actions, and Men become more ſenſible of the tender Impreſſions of Nature by Uſe and Practice: — As the Sons of Muſic by their frequent Converſation with the beſt Maſters, and often practiſing with the beſt Performers, acquire new Skill, as well as a more exquiſite Senſe of Harmony, and become enraptured,

tured, perhaps, at length with their own Compoſitions or Performances.

Such is the happy and enlivening Influence of generous Examples. Such has been, and will be, that of *Yours*, continued and exerted in the ſame laudable Acts of Beneficence. Such you have obſerved yourſelves to be the Effects. And in this Imitation Mankind are nobly ſervile, if to copy the Excellencies and Perfections of the nobleſt Characters be a ſervile imitation!

II. But, *ſecondly*, the Apoſtle adds ſome further Motives to induce you even to enlarge your Bounty, and to extend it to the utmoſt of your Abilities:— "But "this I ſay, He that ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap alſo "ſparingly, and he that ſoweth bountifully ſhall reap "alſo bountifully. Every Man, according as he pur- "poſeth in his Heart, ſo let him give, not grudging- "ly or of Neceſſity: For God loveth a chearful Gi- "ver. And God is able to make all *(Kinds of)* Grace "abound towards you, that ye, always having all Suf- "ficiency in all Things, may abound unto every good "Work;—as it is written, he hath diſperſed abroad, "he hath given to the Poor: his Righteouſneſs re- "maineth for ever."

Where no Culture has been beſtowed, no Returns can be expected. Where no Seed has been ſown, or too

too ſmall a Proportion, no Crop will be produced, or but a poor one: But the liberal and judicious Huſbandman, who ſpares no Pains or Expence for the Improvement of his Farm, and ſcatters his Seed, as well as Manure, with a bountiful Hand, ſhall find a large Increaſe from the grateful Soil, and reap the happy Fruits of his Labour.

And thus, while the Niggard neither does good to himſelf nor others, and has no real Satisfaction from thoſe Advantages of Fortune, which he has not the Heart to employ to any laudable Purpoſe; the generous Soul, who as freely communicates, as God has bountifully beſtow'd upon him the Bleſſings of his Providence, is not only the happier for thoſe Riches which he makes ſubſervient to his own private Occaſions; but is amply repay'd for the Sacrifices he makes to the Wants and Neceſſities of others. He is amply repay'd, not only in the preſent Satisfaction of Mind which he feels in the Act of Beneficence, in the conſcious Reflection afterwards, when he ſurveys the glorious Advantages accruing to the World by the many well-timed and well-directed Charities, unto which he has contributed, but alſo in the public Acknowledgments which are every Day made him, by the grateful Multitude, whereſoever he makes his perſonal Appearance. For *He* can apply that Paſſage of holy

holy JOB to himſelf, which makes ſuch a beautiful Part of his ſpotleſs Character: — "When the "Ear heard me, then it bleſſed me; and when the "Eye ſaw me, it gave witneſs unto me; becauſe I de- "livered the Poor that cried, and the Fatherleſs, and "him that had none to help him. The Bleſſing of "him that was ready to periſh came upon me; and I "cauſed the Widow's Heart to ſing for Joy. I was "Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame — (if not litterally, yet inſtrumentally). JOB xxix. 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17. And, I may add, he is not only *fully repaid* in Satisfactions of this Kind, which, accompanied with Innocence, are far beyond any other Temporal Gratifications, — but will be infinitely *overpaid* in the *future* Recompence of his Virtue.

For, as God is beſt pleaſed with the Sacrifices offered on the Altar of Benevolence, and makes a particular Account of All Acts of Charity which flow from an Humane and Chriſtian Principle,— ſo moſt emphatically is he ſaid to *love a chearful Giver*, and to eſtimate the Gift according to the Diſpoſition of his Heart who maketh the Offer. The ſame *Promptitude* and *Alacrity* are required of All; — 'tho their Contributions ſhould be ſuted to their Circumſtances. For, that there may be no Diſcouragements laid in the Way of the Well-diſpoſed, whoſe Abilities may not

be equal to their Wiſhes, it is declared, that, " If " there be firſt a willing Mind, it is accepted accord- " ing to that a Man hath, not according to that he " hath not." And that a *Widow's Mite* may in Effect be equal to the Benefactions of Princes, who of their Abundance caſt their Contributions into the Fund of Benevolence.

And, therefore, in any Propoſal, where the Glory of God and the Good of Mankind are conſulted, and the Plan well deſign'd, *No Perſon*, who has any-thing to ſpare from his Neceſſities, is præcluded, or can plead an Excuſe for not contributing his Proportion towards it: Since God, who knows the Heart, does not eſtimate the Bounty by the *Largeneſs of the Gift*, but by the *Readineſs of the Giver*. And if, in the Ardor of his Benevolence, he ſhould happen to *exceed*, is able to make every ſuch ſeeming Extravagance redound even to the immediate Advantage of the Giver, and be a Means of increaſing, inſtead of leſſening his Store. There are Ways and Means, under the Direction of Providence, whereby the Generous Soul, which *always deviſeth liberal Things*, ſhall have a perpetual Fund to ſupply the Calls of its Benevolence, which like the *Widow's Cruſe* of Oil, ſhall never be exhauſted ſo long as there is one real Neceſſity to be ſupply'd at home, or one diſtreſſed Object to be relieved abroad.

III. Where-

III. Whereupon, laſtly, the Apoſtle adds a Wiſh, in the ſame metaphorical Strain, in which we ſhall join with him in behalf of you, the liberal Benefactors to the preſent Charity; and concludes with a Conſideration, unto which I am ſatisfied you will pay all due Attention, as it is indeed worthy of all Acceptation and Regard: —

"Now, he that miniſtereth Seed to the Sower, both "miniſter Bread for your Food, and multiply your "Seed ſown, and increaſe the Fruits of your Righte-"ouſneſs (or juſt Liberality); being enriched in every "Thing in all Bountifulneſs, which cauſeth through "us Thankſgiving to God. For the Adminiſtration "of this Service not only ſupplieth the Want of the "Saints, but is abundant alſo by many Thankſgivings "unto God: Whiles by the Experiment of this Mi-"niſtration they glorify God for your profeſſed Sub-"jection unto the Goſpel of Chriſt, and for your libe-"ral Diſtribution unto them, and unto all Men; and "by *their* Prayer for you, which long after you for "the exceeding Grace of God in you. Thanks be "unto God for his unſpeakable Gift!"

A moſt important, a moſt agreeable, and moſt affecting Conſideration! The well-timed Charity of theſe *Corinthians* not only relieved the Neceſſities of their Brethren, but filled their Hearts with Piety to-

wards God, who had given ſuch Loving-kindneſs unto Men like themſelves, as well as ſhewn it Himſelf in the various Diſpenſations of his Providence; who had inſpired them with the moſt grateful Sentiments towards their Benefactors, and prompted them to expreſs their Gratitude by the warmeſt Acts of Piety; —" *By many Thankſgivings* unto God for the Mercies conveyed unto them by the Inſtrumentality of others; and *by their devout Prayers and Interceſſions* before the Throne of Grace for the Continuance of the Divine Favour towards thoſe, who had been the happy Inſtruments of Providence, and had made ſo benevolent an Uſe of their ſuperior Advantages."

Inſtances of this Kind ye have often ſeen among the other good Effects of THIS DAY'S CHARITY, which the long Catalogue of Cures in the General State of your Hoſpital preſents you. The poor diſtreſſed Objects, which have been relieved by your Bounty, have not always loſt the Remembrance of the Benefit with the Senſe of their Pain; —nor ſneaked away, *Nine out of Ten*, like the cleanſed Lepers in the Goſpel, *without returning to give Glory unto God*;— or gone to the Houſe of the Lord as a Matter of Form only: But, warmed with true Devotion, have made their grateful Acknowledgements to Heaven for its gracious Goodneſs towards them, and been improved in Piety and Virtue,

as

as well as reſtored to their Health and Soundneſs, by their Reſidence in THAT HOUSE OF MERCY, unto which ſo many charitable Hands are always ready to conduct the Diſtreſſed; ſo that *many* of them may juſtly ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "It was good for us, that "we have been afflicted."

Many of them doubtleſs retain, as they are under the higheſt Obligations, the moſt grateful Remembrance of their Benefactors; and forget not thoſe in their Prayers for future Mercies who were the *immediate Inſtruments* of their Recovery, by their happy Skill in Medicine, or the *more remote Ones*, by their generous Contributions; and, perhaps, by the wiſe Proviſions made for their ſpiritual Improvement, the good domeſtic Order preſcribed, and the regular Courſe of ſolemn Prayers in the ſeveral Wards, not only taught them *how to pray*, (a Duty ſome of them might be very defective in before) but reclaimed them from their vicious and profligate Courſes, where Vice and Intemperance have been the Sources of their Diſorders.

Nor indeed is any ſolemn Day more a Day of public Thankſgiving, to the Poor in general, than the Return of *this Anniverſary*, when they conſider the noble Foundation which is laid for the Benefit of future Generations, and behold (amidſt that Load of Taxes intailed

tailed upon us by our many expenſive and bloody Wars) ſuch a glorious Spirit of Beneficence ſtill ſubſiſting among the Beſt of this City and County for the Support of it. Could you ſee the honeſt Hearts of many of thoſe in the *Area* before you, I am perſuaded, ye would find them ready to overflow, or break forth, in Tears, or Expreſſions of Joy and Gratitude.

So that God has been abundantly glorified on this Behalf: While the Memory of Him, whoſe exemplary Zeal firſt ſet on foot, and gave Life and Vigor to the good Deſign, among you; and whoſe perſuaſive Eloquence, and engaging Addreſs, charm'd you into a ready Compliance with the natural Dictates of your own Hearts, will be ever bleſſed among them!

May that Zeal and Ardor of Benevolence, which was firſt kindled by a Coal dropt from the Altar, continue to warm your Breaſts,—eſpecially the Breaſts of Thoſe who immediately wait upon the Altar.—And, as the good Effects of this Charity, ſo wiſely plann'd, ſo impartially conducted, have been ſenſibly felt in every Corner of your County, and experienced in ſo many different Parts of the Kingdom; while every Prejudice has ſubſided or vaniſhed before it, May your good Example have a laſting happy Influence upon all around you, to the greater Glory of God, and more extenſive Benefit of Mankind.

Now

Now therefore unto God, from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh, *For this unſpeakable Gift*, (this generous Spirit of Compaſſion for the Miſerable, infuſed into this Place and Neighbourhood, which I want Language to repreſent according to its Worth and Dignity); let us make our moſt grateful Acknowledgments;—And *let all* the People,—All the *People will*, ſay *Amen*.

F I N I S.

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